



NRC NEWS

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NRC CONDUCTS SPECIAL INSPECTION OF POSSIBLE RADIATION EXPOSURES AT ANN ARBOR MEDICAL FACILITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is conducting a special inspection into possible radiation doses above NRC limits which occurred while family members visited a patient receiving a nuclear medicine treatment at St. Joseph Mercy Health System in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

The medical facility reported to the NRC that a patient received a therapeutic dose of radioactive iodine-131 on July 1. The patient's condition subsequently worsened, and she died on July 7. There is no indication that her death was associated with the iodine-131 treatment.

Members of the patient's family visited during the treatment period and were in prolonged, close contact with the patient.

The hospital reported that one family member may have received a radiation dose in the range of 3,000 to 5,600 millirems, based on conservative assumptions. The NRC limit for radiation doses to a member of the public is 100 millirems per year. (A millirem is a standard measure of radiation dose.)

Radiation exposures in the range reported would not produce any immediate health effects; the NRC limit for workers in occupations associated with radiation is 5,000 millirems per year.

Other family members visiting the patient may have received significantly lower doses, although possibly in excess of the NRC limit.

The hospital placed shielding around the patient to reduce the radiation level and counseled the family members on the need to minimize their time and proximity to the patient. Due to the family members' desire to be near the patient, many of the family members apparently did not adhere to the controls established and the directions provided by the licensee to minimize radiation exposure.

The hospital initially reported the situation to the NRC on August 15 and submitted its final report to the agency on October 1.

Following its review of the reports, the NRC dispatched two radiation specialists to perform a special inspection to review the circumstances surrounding the possible overexposures and to perform independent calculations of the possible radiation doses received by the family members.

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